

SATHABHISHEKAM



Compiled by
Dr V V Parthasarathy



त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।
उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय माऽमृतात् ॥

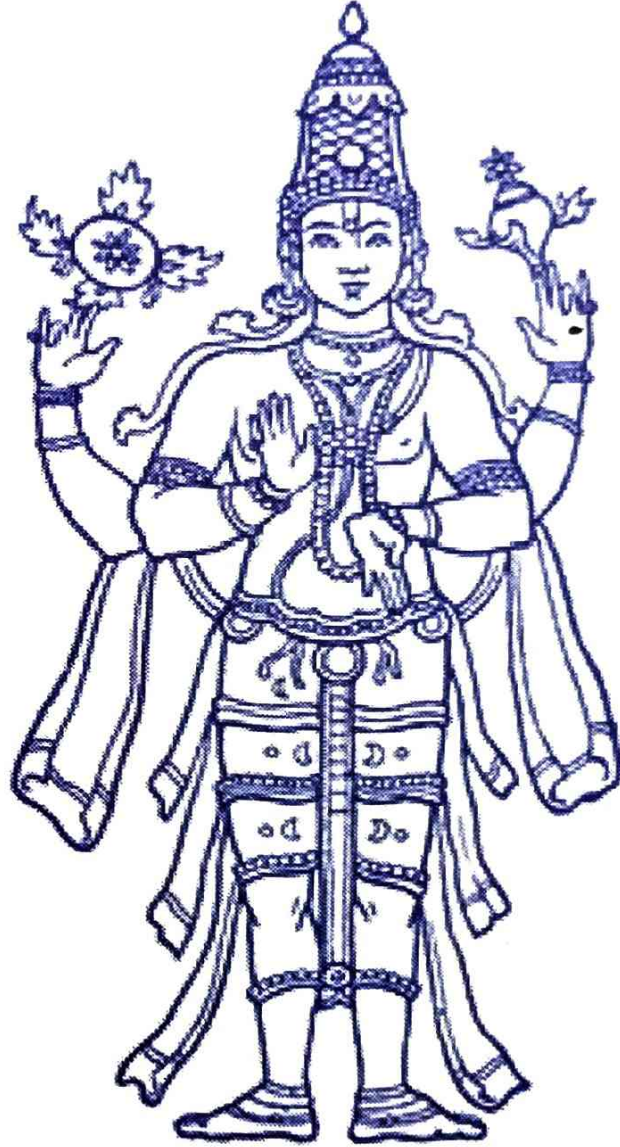
*tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim puṣṭivardhanam
urvārukamiva bandhanānmṛtyormukṣīya mā mṛtāt*

தர்யம்பகம் யஜாமஹே ஸுகந்திம் புஷ்டிவர்த்தனம்
உர்வாருகமீவ பந்தனான்மருத்யோர்முக்சீய 'மா஽ம்ருதாத்

*We offer our worship to the fragrant three-eyed Lord Siva who
confers ever increasing prosperity. Please liberate us from the
hands of the fate as effortlessly as an Urvaruka fruit is separated
from the vine; please do not let us turn away from liberation.*

இயற்கையான நறுமணமுடையவரும் கருணையால்
அடியார்களைப் போஷித்து வளர்ப்பவரும் ஆகிய
முக்கண்ணனை பூஜித்து வழிபடுகிறோம். வெள்ளரிப்பழம்
காம்பிலிருந்து விடுபடுவது போல், விதியின் பிடிப்பிலிருந்து
உமதருளால் விடுபடுவோமாக. மோகஷ மார்க்கத்திலிருந்து
விலகாமலிருப்போமாக.

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Editor's Note

By the Grace of Almighty and divine blessings of Pujiyasri Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Sri Ranganatha Charities has been publishing booklets highlighting our tradition and culture. This booklet gives an insight into the significance of Sathabhishekam, an important ritual in the life of a devout Hindu. We are sure this booklet also will have the same overwhelming response as our earlier publications.

The donations received for these booklets are utilized for the medical and educational benefits of the poor and needy in the society.

MAY LORD ALMIGHTY PROTECT US ALL

Dr. V. V. Parthasarathy

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SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

Foreword

I am very happy to know that you are bringing out a book on Sathabhishekam, a very significant and sacred ritual in the life of one who has lived one thousand full-moons. The ritual is performed by those who are related or connected to the person to receive his/her blessings.

I congratulate and bless Dr. V. V. Parthasarathy for bringing out this booklet adding to his earlier series on Daily Prayers, Puja Vidhi, Hindu Samskaras, Upanayanam, Vedic Wedding, Vishnu Sahasranaamam and Shashtiabdhapoorthi and on deities like Sri Lakshmi and Lord Krishna. This is a contribution to our vedic heritage and I am sure this will be found very useful by everyone.

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Best compliments from
Sri K. Radhakrishnan & Smt. R. Indra
on the occasion of their
Sathabhishekam
on 30th May 2019

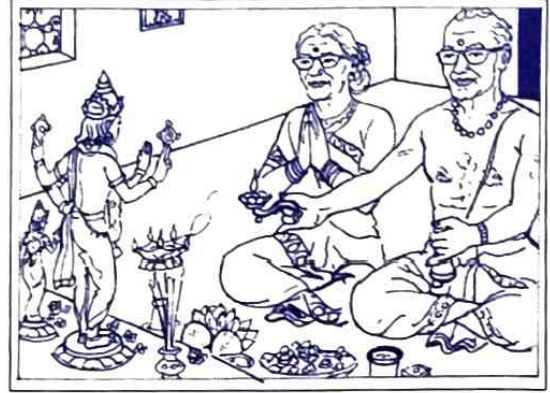
SATHABHISHEKAM

Significance of Sathabhishekam

Sathabhishekam is the sacred ceremony performed on the completion of eighty years. This is supposed to be the second and final stage of Vaanaprastham (the third segment of life: the first two being brahmacharyam and grahastha). This is also considered as the beginning of Mumukshu state (when one seeks for higher reality and seeks liberation from rebirths) and denotes the culmination of a specific stage in a human's life. This is the time when the individual feels fulfillment at the successful achievement of the relevant duties in life. The word "Satha" means 100 but here it takes a different meaning. Satha means "Stable", "Uninterrupted" or "complete". It is common to hear the purohiths chanting during auspicious occasions, "Sathamamaanam Bhavathi Shathaayuh Purushah Devendriya Prathithishtathi". In this, Sathamamaanam means stable and prosperity, and then Shathaayuh denotes hundred years of age. According to our culture and tradition, every man bound by the duties as the head of the family (especially in a patriarchal set-up), is supposed to complete his duties towards the family, like education and marriage for his children before reaching his age of sixty. He then hands over his duties and properties to his children for further management and diverts his attention towards pilgrimage to holy places etc. From now on, he performs the role of an advisor only. However, he continues to impart an adequate training to his children, to independently manage the family responsibilities so that his absence may not be felt.

After a few years, the old couple is no more capable of long and arduous spiritual pilgrimages and time is spent on listening and contemplating on higher spiritual pursuits at home itself. They seek the Lord's Grace to keep them healthy and fit to face the remaining period of life without troubling others much. The remaining duties, if at all any, left over is supposed to be completed by the time the individual reaches seventy years. His 70th birthday is celebrated by the children and grand children as Bheema Ratha Shaanthi with all the rituals similar to Shashtiabdhapoorthi (completion of 60 years). Both these functions are not only the celebration of his successful

achievement of the relevant duties of that particular stage of life and also an opportunity for the children to pay their gratitude to the head of the family. Sathabhishekam is then celebrated at the conclusion of 80 years. This 80 year old man is fortunate to interact with nearly three generations, and performance of Sathabhishekam with the observance of all rituals is supposed to relieve the couple of all sins and reach Heaven. This punya is equated to darshanam (visiting and seeing) of all holy places and a dip in holy Ganges. It is mandatory on the part of the children, as per our dharma saasthras, to show their gratitude by looking after them in their old age. Sathabhishekam is an occasion to reaffirm their faith in this concept of life. The sea changes taking place in the life style, professional competence of the individual and the concept of nuclear family systems have altered many of these concepts. It is a reminder for the children to give the elders more attention and care, even if they had not provided it earlier. This has greater significance these days, when the neglect of the elderly parents is assuming alarming proportions. Sathabhishekam is an event for the children to rededicate themselves to the care of the elderly.



Glory of performer and when to perform

*Nithyannadaatha, Tharunaagnihothree,
Maasopavaasee cha Pathivrathaa cha ||*

*Vedanthavith ChandraSahasradarsi
Shadvandaneeyaa Mamajeevaloke' ||*

The above sloka means that while everyone in this world worship the Almighty, the Lord Himself adores and worships the following 6 classes of people. They are,

- 1 One who does annadhaanam (*provides food for the needy*) daily.
- 2 One who has performed Soma Yaagam at a young age and continuing with Agnihothram (*fire ritual*) throughout his life.

- 3 One who adheres to Maasopavaasam (*It is a praayaschitha karma - to ward off the commissions and omissions*). Maasopavaasam means: fasting on Amaavasya and Pournami nights and day time fasting on Sundays, Ashtami Chathurdasi and fasting throughout the day on Ekadasi.
- 4 A woman selflessly serving her husband without minding the hardships, if any.
- 5 One who has studied the Vedas and Upanishads with meaning and lives a dharmic life as laid down in the saasthras.
- 6 One who has seen 1000 full moon.

It is explained that a person having completed the age of 80 years, 8 months and 8 days would have passed through 1000 moon (*approximately 29 - 30 days has one full moon and if one calculates by the number of days for the period given, it crosses 1000 full moons*). According to the great scholar, saint Bodhaayana, one can have Sathabhishekam performed after the completion of 100 years or after having seen 1000 full moon. Some scholars take it as the third day of the waxing moon (moonram pirai) since this is the one, seen on the head of Lord Siva. Saint Vaikanasa feels 80 years and 8 months are sufficient enough for the celebration.

However, the minor differences in the calculations are not important and only the performance of the Vedic rituals under a scholarly supervision is the most required one.

It is said that on the occasion of Sathabhishekam, all the devaas (Gods) and pithrus (*forefathers*) visit the performer's house, rejoice and bless the couple and everyone assembled there. Hence it is considered as a rare and significant event.

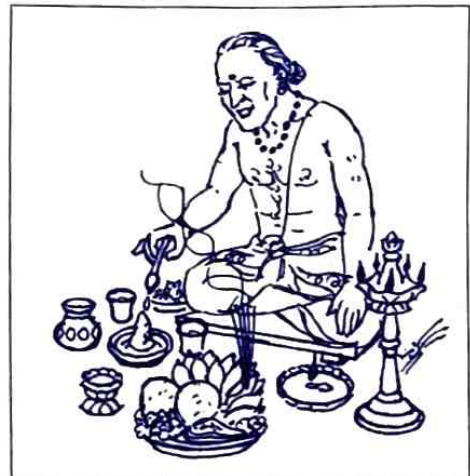
Celebration of Sathabhishekam

This function is performed to a father or grand-father by son, daughter and grandchildren. It is one of the sacred duty of the children to arrange this for the elders. Rudra Ekadasanee, Maangalya dhaaranam, Sumangali Prarthanai etc. are performed as per customs prevalent in the family. The text Shanthiratnakaram proclaims that Sathabhishekam is to be celebrated with Rudra Ekadasanee. If

possible Mahaarudram and Athirudram are performed along with this. Rudra Ekadasanee is an act of atonement (*praayaschitha karma*) for our commissions and omissions. Individuals who perform rudrajapa get freed from bondage of ignorance. According to Suta Samhita, there is no other japa equivalent to this found in the Vedas and Smrithis. In addition to various poojas, part of the wedding ceremony is re-enacted. The couple are blessed by elders who have already celebrated such events. These couple in turn bless the younger ones. More social kind of celebration include making donations for worthy causes, and creating endowments. It is customary to perform various Shanthi Homams and Yagnaas with the help of learned vedic pandits - to ward off all evils that may affect the couple and their children, grand children in the continuing years.

Sathabhisheka Rituals

The performance of rituals vary from sect to sect and many follow established family practices. However, the steps given below are generally followed by most groups. The rituals start 5 to 10 days ahead in some traditional families. A pot of water is sanctified by chanting of holy mantras (*both morning and evening*) in the presence of the family deity and this water is later used for further rituals on the day of Sathabhishekam.

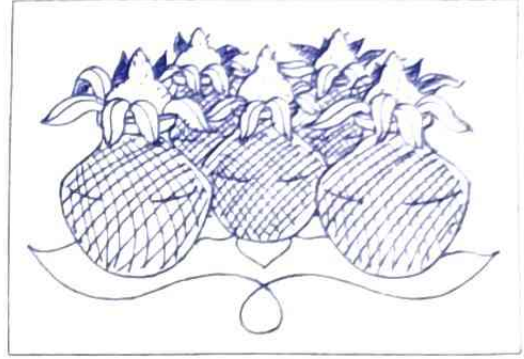


- 1 Anugnai (*Seeking permission to start*)
- 2 Vishvaksena or Ganesa Pooja
- 3 Gruhapreethi, Navagraha Puja Krichraacharam (*al purification ceremonies*)
- 4 Naandhi, in most of the families this ritual is performed at this juncture to invoke the blessings all the forefathers
- 5 Punyahavaachanam (*purification of the place and the items used*)

6 Kumbasthabhanam (*invoking the Devathaas in pots*)

7 Sathabhisheka Japa

8 Sathabhisheka Shaanthi Homams including one for Praayaschitha (*homam for commissions and omissions*)



9 Sahasradhara Abhishekam (*pouring purified water over the couple*)

10 Vasthradhaaranam (*wearing of new clothes*)

11 Neyyila pakardhu (*seeing in ghee*)

12 Maangalya Dhaaranam (*tying of Maangalya Sutra*)

13 Obeisance to Lord (*Perumaal Mariyadhai*)

14 Akshadhari Aaseervaadam (*blessing by elders*)

15 Blessings by relatives with gifts

16 Perumaal (*God*), Aachaarya (*gurus and teachers*) Sambaavanai (*paying respects to the Lord and teachers with cash, to be sent to the respective temples or mutts*)

17 Sambandhi Sambhaavanai (*gifts to relatives*)

18 Kalasa Vasthra Prithima Dhaanam (*to the purohit who conducted the proceedings*)

19 Paying respects to the one who supervised the entire procedure (*Brhaspathi / Guru*)

20 Mangala Aarthi

Punyahavaachanam

After the completion of the invocatory rituals (*steps 1- 4 as mentioned earlier*), further proceedings start with performance of Punyahavaachanam (*purification ritual*). This ritual is part of every auspicious function in our tradition. A platform of bricks is laid for all

the vedic rituals. A small pot of water is kept on a platform of rice on a plantain leaf. The pot is wrapped by a cloth (*vasthram*) and decorated. A few leaves of mango tree and a coconut are placed on the pot. The chief priest along with few other assistants chant manthraas for purification of this water and at the end, this holy water is sprinkled all over the place.

Significance : The pot that is placed on the rice is like God Himself. The rice platform acts like a throne for Him. The wrapping of the pot with a cloth (*vastram*) signifies the clothing of Lord. The water that is held in the pot is very holy for the same reason.



Kalasa Sthabhanam

While, for other rituals like Shashtiabdhapoorthi and Bheemaratha Shaanthi the number of kalasams may vary from family to family, for Sathabhishekam normally only 5 Kalasams (*kumbam, pot*) with holy water are used. These are placed over Dhaanyas (*grains*) like, Paddy, Rice, Wheat, Masha, Black til seed etc. After installation of Kalasas, purohits invoke devathaas like Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and other deities like Prajapathi, Parameshti, Chaturmukha and Hiranyagarbar with vedic manthraas and complete Shodasa Upachara Pooja (*16 ways of Pooja*). This includes ashtothra archana and offering of flowers and food (*naivedhyam*).

Devathaas invoked in the rituals

Devathaas invoked and worshipped include Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Navagraha (*sun, moon, mars, mercury, jupiter, venus, saturn, raahu, kethu*), seven 'chiranjevies' (*immortal souls*), namely - Aswathama, Mahaabala, Veda Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibheshana, Krupacharya and Parasurama, 6 ayur devathaas. (*devathaas for longevity*), 8 dik palakaas (*Gods for all directions*), like Indra; Agni; Yama; Nirruthi; Varuna; Vaayu; Kubera; Esaana, etc. The other devathaas invoked include Vasudeva, Sankarshnan, Pradhumnan, Anirudhan, Kubera Lakshmi, Yakshas, Kinnaras, Snakes, Seers etc. The long list includes holy rivers, vedas, oceans, and entire concept of time.

Sathabhisheka Japa

As the preparatory rituals take place, groups of priests keep chanting portions from the four Vedas simultaneously. These chanting invoke the blessings of the Lord and all the devathaas. During the chanting, the male member of the couple who perform the Sathabhishekam holds one end of *darbai* (a type of grass) while the other end touches the pot. The idea here is that the sanctifying power of the Vedas chanted is being transferred through this connection to the water in the pot. As a result of this, the water in the pot is sanctified with the blessings of all the devathaas and is considered holy. The chanting includes that of Suktas like Purusha, Narayana, Vishnu, Sri, Bhoo, Neela, Pavamaana, Varuna, Rudra, Durga, Mruthyu, Ayushya, Baagya and manthraas like Thryambaka, Rudra, Gayathri, Dik Palaka. Sri Rudram and Chamakam are also chanted. This Japa concludes with Nakshatra Sooktham, Grutha Sooktham, Pancha Shaanthi and Ghosha Shaanthi. In some places first panchathi from each of the 44 anuvakas from the Yajur Veda Samhitha, are also chanted.

Sathabhisheka Homam

A Homam or Havan is a ceremony in which various forms of the Divine Gods and Demi-Gods are invoked in a sacred fire that has been kindled according to the guidelines in the Vedic scriptures. Certain special offerings are made into the fire while Manthraas are chanted. The combination of the powerful energy of the fire and the vedic manthraas creates extremely auspicious and purifying vibrations that are beneficial to all those who attend the Homam. The smoke that rises from a Homam contains a powerful healing energy, and as it rises to the heavens it purifies the atmosphere, both physically and subtly, encouraging a peaceful environment and gentle weather. Due to Divine grace, every kind of negative karma can be purified by the sacred homam fire.



The homams performed during Sathabhishekam include, Navagraha homam (*praying to all planets for the well-being*), Dhanvanthri homam (*praying for good health*) Sudharsana homam (*for total wellbeing*) and Mruthyunjaya homam (*praying for longevity*). The choice of the homams, japas and manthraas vary from sect to sect and depend on certain family traditions. They also depend on the availability of the expert pundits, time and financial resources. Most of the saivites perform Rudra Ekadasanee ritual previous day.

Manthraas and significance

The manthraas chanted during this ritual gives to the couple long life, prosperity, fame, absence of desire, well being of children and grand children, and absence of troubles from enemies. These manthraas fall into 2 categories 1. Shaanthi Manthraas (*the ones which remove doshas/defects and obstacles*) 2. Pushtika Karma Manthraas (*the ones which grant prosperity and further growth in life*).

In all these rituals Brahma (*the creator and the embodiment of Vedas*) is the main deity. It is believed that by propitiating Him, all the dharma shaasthras contained in the Vedas are followed by the couple

Sathabhisheka Abhishekam (Mangala Snaanam)

This is the most significant and important part of the ritual. It is believed firmly that all the devathaas themselves do the abhishekam for the couple. By performing this Mangala Snaanam - one is praying for poorna aayul (*complete life*), good health, fame, courage, prosperity,



good appearance, removal of all diseases, strength, fulfillment of all desires, removal of ugliness, gaining of knowledge and removal of all sins and acquiring of all comforts in life. The individual prays to all the devathaas and Gods to grant all the above to him and his entire family. This holy water in the kalasaas purified by all the manthraas is now poured on the couple through a sieve in which several auspicious items are placed. After the priest pours a few drops symbolically,

family members starting from the eldest, sprinkle the water on the couple. A little water is left behind for the near and dear ones who attend the function.

Normally, the items used for the abhishekam (snaanam) include 11 Dravyas. They are :

- 1 Gorochanam (*to be applied on the head*)
- 2 Curd (*to be applied on the forehead*)
- 3 Ghee (*to be applied on the eye lids*)
- 4 Blades of grass (*to be placed on the head*)
- 5 Cow's Milk (*to be sprinkled on the head*)
- 6 Fruits (*touch the fruits with hands*)
- 7 Flowers (*place on the head*)
- 8 Mirror (*view the mirror*)
- 9 Deepam (*see the light of the deepam*)
- 10 Earth (*touch the earth; preferably the mud from beneath the tulasi plant*)
- 11 Gold (*place a coin or gold article on the head*).

Each of the above Dravya is used, praying for specific fulfillment of desires.

The entire abhisheka should be done only by scholarly elders and ritviks.

Vasthra Dhaaranam (*Wearing of new clothes*)

After the auspicious bath, the couple wears new clothes and performs the dhaana ritual. Aardra Vastra Dhaanam (*the cloth used by the couple at the time of abhisheka*), cloth wrapped around Kalasas as well as the icons (*prathimas*) made of Gold or Silver, if any, placed over the respective kalasas, are given as dhaana to purohiths.

Neyyila pakardhu (*seeing in ghee*) : This is yet another ritual (*similar to kannadila pakkardhu for Shastiabdhapoorthi*) for removing

drishti(evil eye). Here the couple see themselves in ghee kept in a iron vessel. In some families apart from the couple the guests are also made to see in the ghee. As in the previous ritual, the ghee with the vessel is gifted to a brahmin.

DHAANAM (Gifts)

The types of Dhaanaas (gifts) like Cow etc. depends upon the customs followed in the respective families and the financial capabilities of the individual. Usually ten types of dhaanams are observed and these days they are generally replaced by cash. The ten dhaanaas are:

- 1 *Go Dhaanam* - Offering of cow, praying for peace / prosperity e t c .
(Generally substituted by a Coconut and cost of a cow, in rupees).
- 2 *Bhoo Dhaanam* - Offering of Land for cultivation or dwelling, praying for comfortable living. (Generally substituted by Sandal Wood piece).
- 3 *Tila Dhaanam* - Offering of Seasmé (black) in a copper or iron vessel, praying for removal of all sins.
- 4 *Hiranya Dhaanam* - Offering of gold, praying for removal all acquired sins.
- 5 *Grutha Dhaanam* - Offering of Ghee in a bronze vessel for pleasing all devathaas and praying for removal of all aarjitha paapas.
- 6 *Nava dhanyam* - Offering of grain, praying for removal of dhrishti. In this, each planet (graham) of the navagrahas is invoked upon and then the offering of grain is done for each graham. Each graham has a respective color associated with it and there are specifications as to what to offer each graham, like seasame (yellu), rice, etc. Before the beginning of this ritual, the dhanyams, along with a small token of money, are placed on the colored cloth representing each graham. After invoking the particular planet, the grains are again gifted to a brahmin.
- 7 *Vastra Dhaanam* - Offering of veshti with uthareeyam (dhoti and upper cloth), praying for good health and prosperity.
- 8 *Kula Dhaanam* - Offering of jaggery to please Goddess Lakshmi, seeking all prosperity.

- 9 *Roupya Dhaanam* - Offering of silver to please pithrus (*fore fathers*) and Mahaa Vishnu seeking their blessings.
- 10 *Lavana Dhaanam* - Offering of salt to please Sri Rudra, seeking good health.

Apart from the above, some people give Pancha Dhaanam also (*Gift of 5 items*). They are - Deepam (*lamp*), Pusthakam (*a religious book*), Kantam (*a bell*), Vastram (*cloth*) and Udhaka Kumba (*Brass or Copper vessel with water*).

In addition to the above ten, six more dhaanams are also observed in some places (*Shad Dhaanas*). They are Deepam, Jala Patram, Salagramam, Siva Lingam, Vibhoothi, Rudraksham. In Samkalpitha Dhaanam, Phalaka (*Wooden Plank-Seat*), Chatra (*Umbrella*), Yashti (*Walking Stick*), Vyajanam (*Hand Fan*), Paadha Raksha (*chappal*), etc. are included. Bhoori Dhakshina is given to all Scholars and other elders who have graced the occasion. Finally, Phala Dhaana is to be given to one and all who attend the function.

Significance

When each of the items mentioned above are offered to a brahmin, it signifies that dhristi (*effect of evil eye*) is transferred on to the brahmin. He then rids himself of this extra dhristi by doing puja, prayers etc.



Most of the items received are of great utility in the life of the brahmin who receives it. These Dhaanams are also made to seek the blessings of all Devathaas, purohits, and the good wishes of the elders present on the occasion.

Maangalya Dhaaranam (*Tying of Thaali*)

There is no direct mention of this ritual anywhere but couples who have not had this during Shashtiabdhapoorthi earlier do have this now. This practice varies from family to family.

Concluding Rituals

The rituals get concluded with Mahaa Aaseervaadhams (*blessings for everyone*) from Ritviks (*scholars and pundits*) and elders present there. Obeisance to Lord (*Perumaal Mariyadhai*), is followed by the Guru lineage up to the present family perceptor (*gurus and teachers*). Acharya Sambaavanai (*paying respects to the Lord and teachers with cash to be sent to the respective temples or mutts*) is followed by



Akshadhai Aaseervaadham (*blessings by elders*). The younger guests and relatives are blessed by the couple, Sambandhi Sambhaavanai (*gifts to parents of son-in-law and daughter-in-law*) is a very significant practise and finally paying respects to the one who supervised the entire procedure (*Brhaspathi / guru*) is meticulously followed. After these steps are completed Mangala Aarthi is taken and the rituals come to end. The relatives and guests are treated with a sumptuous lunch. Since the couple for whom the Sathabhishekam is performed are great by all means, in earlier days they were taken in a procession on an elephant or horse drawn chariot or a decorated car along the streets of the village or town with Veda Paaraayanam and after visiting a temple they give charity. It is also a great moment of joy for all relatives and a time for family reunion forgetting past mistakes and hurts!

Conclusion

When the couple devotedly go through these rituals there is immense peace of mind and rejuvenation of body and mind. The chanting of these manthraas provides them enormous mental strength to face the remaining life span.

May The Lord Almighty Bless One and all.



Sri Ranganatha Charities

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 - **Sathabhishekam** - Importance of 80th Birthday and its Significance in English / Tamil
 - **Pearls of Wisdom from Bhagavad Gita** - Selected verses from Divine Teaching in English
 - **Mahabharata for Kids** - Mahabharata retold in simple form in English
 - **Srinivasa Govinda** - History of Tirumala, Suprabhatam with meaning in English
 - **Nethra Darsanam** - Chakshushopanishat - Remedy for Blindness - Slokas with meaning in English & Tamil

